

# THE POKIES PLAY YOU

## Alliance calls for end to advertising deluge, greater transparency

Tuesday, November 7, 2017

As the nation gets ready for the Melbourne Cup, The Alliance for Gambling Reform today called for broader advertising restrictions and for politicians, regulators and industry participants to ensure 2017 is remembered as the year of “peak gambling”.

With Australians being bombarded with advertising messages, including thousands of unsolicited text messages, Alliance spokesman Tim Costello said the time has come for more decisive action across the board.

“It can’t get any worse than 2017 with wall-to-wall advertising, huge online gambling growth and total national gambling losses set to rise again to more than \$25 billion,” Mr Costello said. “Within 6 months we will have some reasonable federal advertising restrictions in place but they do not go nearly far enough.”

“The current deluge of ads across all platforms is clearly unacceptable because kids and family are being exposed like never before. I turned on Channel 7 at 9.30am this morning and was immediately hit by a Ladbrokes ad, the very company which was [yesterday fined 2.3 million pounds](#) by British regulators for failing to protect customers.”

“Some changes will finally be implemented next April, but if the politicians were serious there would be a complete ban on gambling advertising on all free to air stations during children’s viewing times.”

The Alliance also called on Australian politicians to lift their game on gambling transparency.

“It’s woeful that we don’t have any gambling loss data [since 2014-15](#), when Australians lost \$22.7 billion gambling, an increase of 7.7% on the previous year,” Mr Costello said.

“If that rate of growth has continued, total losses will hit \$28.4 billion in 2017-18 and Sportsbetting is the fastest growing category, jumping by 30% to \$815 million in 2014-15 and clearly well past \$1 billion a year now.”

Queensland government statistics show the [2014-15 Australian losses](#) were as follows:

- # All gambling spending rose 7.7% to \$22.73 billion.
- # Racing spending, which is different from sports betting, rose 2.7% to \$2.81b in 2014-15.
- # Pokies are still the biggest category of total losses, jumping 4.9% to \$11.6b in 2014-15.
- # Casino losses grew by 17.8% to \$5.17 billion in 2014-15 and with new casinos currently under construction in Brisbane and Sydney, this will continue to rise.

If you extrapolate the 7.7% growth in 2014-15, total Australian gambling spending would have grown to \$24.48 billion in 2015-16, \$26.36 billion in 2016-17 and \$28.4 billion in 2017-18.

In per capita terms, Australians have long been the world's worst in terms of gambling losses as [this chart](#) from *The Economist* demonstrates.

Australians lose \$US990 a year gambling, which is 40% more than the next biggest spending country Singapore, followed by Ireland and Finland which have embraced online gambling.

To mark peak gambling season associated with the Melbourne Cup, The Alliance today listed 4 examples of gambling industry capture and 4 examples where there is hope for reform.

#### **FOUR RECENT EXAMPLES OF EXCESSIVE GAMBLING INDUSTRY INFLUENCE IN AUSTRALIA**

1. Limited advertising bans haven't actually happened yet so families and kids are still being deluged at all times of the day across all media platforms.
2. Tabcorp hosted at least 12 current and former politicians in its Derby Day marquee at Flemington, according to [media reports](#). These included Marise Payne, Stuart Ayres, Mitch Fifield, Scott Ryan, NSW Gaming Minister Paul Toole, Michael O'Brien, Tim Wilson, Craig Laundry, Barry O'Farrell, Philip Dalidakis, Victorian Racing Minister Martin Pakula, Sam Dastyari and Jacqui Lambie.
3. The Victorian Legislative Assembly [voted 81-3 last Thursday](#) in favour of issuing new 20 year pokies licences which will generate an estimated \$70 billion in losses with very little reform or media debate.
4. The NSW Government sat on its gambling harm study for two years and then cynically coincided its release with the High Court citizenship decision to minimise public discussion. See [media report](#).

#### **FOUR AREAS OF HOPE FOR LONG OVERDUE AUSTRALIAN GAMBLING INDUSTRY REFORM**

1. Federal Minister Alan Tudge continues to implement reasonable reforms in areas such as online gambling, credit betting and a national self-exclusion list, but more needs to be done.
2. An anti-pokies campaigner Jo Siejka [won the Pembroke by-election](#) for Labor on Saturday, increasing the prospects of Tasmanian Labor going to the 2018 state election with a policy of removing pokies from pubs and clubs in 2023.
3. There are encouraging offshore developments with the British Government moving strongly to crackdown on its rampant gambling industry, recently publishing this [62 page consultation paper](#) and even the Trump administration is [opposing](#) New Jersey's US Supreme Court case attempting to lift the Federal ban on sports betting in the US.
4. Australian advertising regulators actually managed to pull a [tasteless Neds television ad](#) off the air over the weekend, albeit generating significant brand awareness for the dubious company.

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